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Discipline and Punish 40 years on: Foucault, big data analytics, crime, and the digital Panopticon

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes the opportunity to re-read *Discipline and Punish* and to consider its implications in the light of emerging technological developments, namely big data analytics and social media. The paper reviews key social and organizational research surrounding these technological trends, critically connecting key themes of criminal investigation, disciplinary or legal incidents and state surveillance with Foucauldian concepts, including the Panopticon metaphor, biopower, governmentality, and the validity of a genealogical method that now must seek to understand the trajectories, forms, and contents of 21st century subjectivities. The paper develops several institutional and organizational case studies along these lines to further illuminate these connections, including Edward Snowden, the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), and IBM's counter-fraud measures to prevent white-collar crime. Historical and cultural connections are also referenced, including the 19th century physician Cesare Lombroso, and the 2002 Hollywood science fiction thriller, *Minority Report*. The paper concludes with a set of implications and recommendations extrapolating from Foucault's work to suggest refined ways of thinking about power, knowledge, resistance, discipline and surveillance in technologically evolved social, legal, and criminal environments of the 21st century. Mutually enriching parallels are also drawn between Foucault's work, and that of other major social and political theorists, including Steven Lukes, Erving Goffman, John Gray, and Emile Durkheim. More specifically, big data and

social media are discussed in relation to managing private/public boundaries, the creation of 'cyberplaces' across cybergeographies, crime prevention, and possibilities for civic resistance and reform in the face of prevailing strains of neoliberal ideology.

Keywords: Foucault, big data, analytics, social media, surveillance, crime, neoliberalism